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A CONFEDERATE SPY

WAS HANGED AT BARRANCAS, FLORIDA,
DURING THE CIVIL WAR

CAPT. J. T. MANN

Of Fitzgerald, Ga., Had A Narrow Escape—
Was Saved By A Yankee Sergeant,
Who Thought They Had the
Wrong Man!

“You ask me to tell you how it feels to be hanged?” said Rev. J. T. Mann, of Fitzgerald, Ga., who is now in Pensacola for the first time since 1864, to a Journal Reporter yesterday. Well, I suppose if there is anyone qualified to do so it is myself, as I spent four minutes of my career at the end of a hangman’s rope near your city during the Civil War. It occurred at Fort Barrancas, where I was captured as a Confederate spy, and but for the fact that a sergeant ordered me taken down, as he thought the wrong man was being executed, I would not now be here telling you of the sensations a man feels dangling at the end of a rope.

As an introductory it may be stated that Rev. Mann is a Baptist minister, and preached two sermons in the city Sunday. His throat, however, prevents his regularly filling a pulpit, and he is now traveling through this section of the State in the interest of some publications. He is a man of slim build, rather taller than the average, with iron grey beard, and his hair is well sprinkled with white. His

face portrays the characteristics which made the Southern Soldier famous—bravery and daring—and to the close observer he is a perfect picture of the grey-haired vet., as he is portrayed in history, closely resembling Stonewall Jackson, in the cut of his beard and the mould of his features.

FIRST VISIT SINCE 1864.

This is my first visit to your city since the eventful year of '64, and I intend going to Warrington and Fort Barrancas, and look over the scenes, and see if there are any familiar marks left, and I will also endeavor to locate the gentleman who secreted me for three days while the Federals were searching for me. He lived at Warrington, but his name has slipped my memory. I hope I will be able to locate him, though it has been a long time, and perhaps he has passed to the Great Beyond.

“But you ask me to tell you the sensations of being hanged.” Well, to be truthful, there are not enough adjectives in the unabridged to describe the sensations. It is so wonderfully painful that a person would have to undergo the experience to realize to the fullest extent all that is felt. But, I will tell you as best I can how I felt when the noose was around my neck, but in order to do so, I will have to detail a little Civil War History, how I came to be a Confederate spy, and my subsequent capture at Fort Barrancas.

ENLISTED AS A PRIVATE.

While quite a young man I enlisted as a private in Company H, Bogart Guards, com-

manded by Captain George Meyhi, of the Third Louisiana Battallion of "Tigers," which was commanded by Lieut.-Col. L. S. Bradford. I received my baptism of fire at Mechanicsville in July, 1862, in the seven days' fight around Richmond, and at Gaines' Mill, sustained a slight wound in the left hand and a bullet passed through the back of my neck, which nearly uncoupled life and body. In the battle of Manassas I was wounded in the right hip and left thigh, and this was how I came to be a spy. As soon as I was out of the hospital I was placed in this service, with the rank of captain. After a varied experience I was provided with an expired furlough and a military order offering \$50 reward for my apprehension as a deserter. With these in hand I was commanded to present myself at the Federal camp at the head of Choctawhatchie Bay, above Barrancas, and was welcomed heartily.

Here my work began, and I made the acquaintance of a genial sergeant of Co. B, Seventh Vermont Volunteers, and a warm friendship grew up between us. I was accorded free access to the Pensacola Navy Yard, and the Federal gunboats, and old Fort Pickens, and by keeping my eyes and ears open soon possessed valuable information, which I managed to communicate to Gen. D. H. Maury, at Mobile. Among other things I learned that a paymaster was shortly expected with funds for all troops in New Orleans and the Mississippi River and the men on the gunboat fleet, and the troops at Barracas, and the men at work in the navy yard.

A plan was devised by Gen. Maury to capture the paymaster and his funds. A plan was also devised by Col. Page Baker, now editor-in-chief of the Times-Democrat, who was to make an attack from the open sea in the dead of night, on Fort Pickens, taking his men there in boats from the Perdido river. Col. Baker had nearly 200 picked men for this service, which he was to command, and which he believes yet would have been successful, but Gen. Maury would not give his consent at the hour for Col. Baker's departure.

TO BLOW UP MAGAZINE.

But I am getting away from my subject. My part in Gen. Maury's plan was to set fire to the powder magazine and under cover of the resulting confusion of the explosion, the Confederates were to make the attack. The firing of a pistol beyond the picket line near the Light House was to apprise me that General Maury was ready to perform his part of the programme.

Well, on the fateful night I and my friend, the Vermont sergeant, spent part of the night over a bottle of wine. I had prepared a ball of twine, which, steeped in turpentine, I intended to use in blowing up the magazine. Along about 11:00 o'clock we bade one another good night. I had turned the hands of the sergeant's watch up about an hour and a half, and he thought it was nearing 1:00 a. m. I left the sergeant's tent, and a few moment's afterwards I heard a pistol shot, apparently at the place agreed upon as my signal. I hastily got my ball of twine, and going to within a short distance of the magazine, lighted it and

hurled it at the magazine. Just as I threw it I saw a sentinel not fifteen feet away. He saw the deed, and jumping to the burning ball he threw it toward me and then fired at me as I fled. That bullet passed so close to my head that it raised a blister on my right ear. A burning cigar would have accomplished the purpose designed, whereas the blaze failed. I afterwards found that General Maury had given up the attack as too dangerous, when too late to give me notice.

SECRETED AT WARRINGTON.

Well, I ran to Warrington, where I went to the house of a friend, whose name I have forgotten. He was a true Southerner, but employed at the navy yard. The sentinel had gotten a fairly good view of my face as the light flared when I lighted the ball of cord, and of course, details of soldiers were out looking for me. I remained at the house of my friend for three days, but realizing that he would be placed in a very compromising position if I was found there, I decided to make a dash for liberty, and the fourth night I tried to escape to the Confederate lines, but was captured and taken to the encampment of the Seventh Vermont Regiment of Infantry near to Fort Barrancas.

HANGED TO A JOIST.

There was where I had the experience of being hanged. A crowd of infuriated soldiers surrounded me, and realizing that they had captured a Confederate spy, proceeded to hang me without further ado. A rope was slipped around my neck and the other end was placed over a projecting beam of a building over

which they pulled me up by hand, until I was about a finger's length above the earth I could touch the ground with my toes, however, and this I was doing when discovered in the act by one of the Yanks. To remedy this defect the executioners scooped a hole in the sand with their hands sufficient to let my body swing free and it was then that I choked into a state of insensibility. When life was nearly extinct the Vermont sergeant, having been called, ran up and interfered, and ordered my body to be taken down, insisting that I was the wrong man. Restoratives were applied, and by vigorous friction I was resuscitated.

SENSATIONS FELT.

"But tell me the sensations you felt when you were hanged," requested the reporter.

The first sensation, replied Mr. Mann, was as near like that of a steam boiler ready to explode as anything I can call to mind. Every vein and blood vessel leading to and from the heart seemed to be charged with an oppressive fullness that must find an avenue of escape or explode. The nervous system throughout its length was tingling with a painful, pricking sensation, the like of which I never felt before or since. Then followed the sense of an explosion, as if a volcano had erupted. This seemed to give me relief, and the sensation of pain gave way slowly to a pleasurable feeling—a feeling much to be desired by everyone could it be arrived at without hanging. With this sensation a light broke in upon my sight resembling a milky whiteness, yet strange to say, so transparent that it was easier to pierce with the eye than the

light of day. Then there came into my mouth a taste or sweetness the like of which I have never since known. Then I felt as though I was moving on, and leaving something behind—a weight—a hindrance * * * a consciousness which seemed to say good-bye to the body. I wandered on, but how far, as to the yardstick, I could not say, but I came to an immense wall.

Beyond that wall I heard music, the most entrancing I ever listened to—I several times counted to be sure that I heard twenty-two separate parts to the same tune, and it seemed that more than a thousand harps led in each part, accompanied by myraids of voices, and I recognized, I think, the old much-loved tune, “All Hail the Power of Jesus Name,” as the leading part of their music.

Yes, those are some of the sensations I felt when I was hanged, and as I was hearing this sweet music I think they let me down.

COMING BACK TO LIFE.

Now, what is the sensation of coming back to life? asked the reporter.

Just as painful as those experienced when being hanged, replied Mr. Mann. It was acute torture, a torture so excruciating as to tempt man to circle the moon and put out the light of the stars, rather than endure it. Every nerve seemed to have a pain of its own. My nose and finger ends seemed to be the seats of the most excruciating agony of all. In half an hour the pain was all over, and I would not go through it again for the wealth of the Indies.

Yes, sir, I have been hanged. I am one of

the few who live to tell of its sensations, not only those you experience when dangling at the end of a rope, but also of knowing that you are leaving this world.

TRIED BY COURT-MARTIAL.

You ask, "What happened afterwards?"

Well, I was court-martialed and came free.

You see the sentinel swore that it was about 11:30 o'clock at night when he saw me attempt to blow up the powder magazine, but the sergeant swore that I was with him until nearly 1:00 o'clock a. m. in his tent. He swore truthfully, according to his watch, for I had turned it ahead two hours.

"Did the sergeant's testimony relieve you of suspicion after you were acquitted?" asked the reporter.

Upon the word of that sergeant all suspicion of guilt was removed from the minds of those who knew him well. But when a dog has earned a hard name he is never forgiven. And the same is true of any man with a stain upon his name. It is wiped off by a long life of irreproachable conduct. Every eye that looked upon me seemed to say "guilty."

You ask me "How long did I remain in the Federal lines after the court martial?"

It was less than a week; four days perhaps.

"How did you escape? Was leaving their camp not surrounded with danger?"

Yes, I was conscious that an open eye was upon me all the time. This gave me more concern for my future than I felt when the rope was on my neck; for then, I asked my-

self this question: "Who will relieve me from this rope? How will I get away from here?"

Sol. Smith, who previous to the war had been upon the detective force of Pensacola, had been made Gen. Maurey's chief scout. He had free access to their camps; could pass in and out at pleasure as a huckster. I entrusted every item of information to him for delivery. He was an "Underground-grape-vine-telegram" between myself and Gen. Maury.

Anticipating his arrival, and by putting two and two together, I had made my conclusions this way: That if we were seen to meet and speak, that both of us would be suspicioned, thrown into prison, and executed upon a very slender thread of circumstantial evidence. My conclusions were correct. As soon as he appeared in camp I was conscious that the number of eyes watching me were doubled. In spite of my efforts to evade him, he run me down, and his first words were almost fatal. He saw the effects of his words upon me and his mistake then dawned upon him, but his ready wit apparently turned down any cause for suspicion. We separated until after sun set, and met out beyond the drill ground among some small, thorny, scrubby brush—a peculiar growth in that locality. We discovered that six men with guns were coming our way. To be overtaken meant our capture, or a duel unto death, because both were well armed. It was not safe for us to exchange shots, unless sure of our escape from them.

OUR DANGER.

We were near the line of pickets that extended a mile in length across the neck of

the peninsula from the Gulf to an inlet. There was too much of daylight to try to force our way across their line safely. There were four gate-ways of escape between which to choose. One was across the neck of land to the Inlet, which opened into Pensacola Bay. It could be forded at low tide. We could make a run for that place, but it was a public resort for idle crocodiles. A rifle pit for the pickets extended from the Light House to the Inlet. A stretch of white sand forty yards wide lay between the Inlet and highland and a man was a fair mark night or day on that sand. Another route was an open road passing by the Light House, and the last choice was by the Gulf shore.

TAKING CHANCES.

Escaping our pursuers to give us time to consider which of these gates we would select was the important thought at that moment. Those scrubby thorn bushes curiously bent their limbs in an arch to the sand. Two of them near each other would afford a small man cover in the darkness. We found such bushes as we needed as twilight was fast fading out. We went under them, taking our chances of elusion, or discovery and a duel. Our pursuers followed us by our tracks in the sand to near where we were. We listened to their talk as they passed on by us and returned. When we knew that they had abandoned pursuit we felt assured of our escape from their lines that night.

OUR ESCAPE.

Having now a bit of leisure we canvassed all avenues that were open for our departure.

Crocodiles are said to regard the flesh of a white man as the most dainty morsel. We therefore declined to invade their territory. We preferred to fight our equals in the open at places of our own choosing. We also declined the sandy margin at the Inlet. I preferred to take chances of running the gauntlet by the Light House. Smith declined that route, for it was the guardsman's headquarters and all of them on the line reclined there when off duty. Then only the margin by the gulf was open as a last choice. There was a bank slightly higher than a man's head along the Gulf shore. One sentry's beat of about thirty steps lay along this sea front on this bank. "By stealthy approaches we can make our way to the shoulder of the bank when the sentry turns to re-walk his beat. The roar of waves breaking on the sand will be much in our favor. I will fix this bayonet on a pike, and as the sentry turns, I will wound him by a heavy jab in his ribs, and then we can run for safety," said my friend Smith. A bit of practice made Smith's plans a success. We had run a hundred yards, perhaps, when we heard a call of distress, saying: "Corporal of the guard, post number two, run here quick." We did not tarry to learn what he wanted in his call of distress. It was now nearly 3 o'clock in the morning. It was seven miles up the Perdido River to where Smith's brother-in-law lived. We made our way there and waited for breakfast and then went on, as we did not desire to linger near where Federal cavalry scouts might appear.

CHASED BY DOGS.

We were two miles away on our journey, when the sound of yelping dogs caught our ears. Smith's words were full of meaning when he said: "Mann, our safety lies in a successful run of three miles up the river to an old mill seat; my boat is there and if we can reach there in time we can row out in the river beyond gun shot range or we will have to hide in the hollow of a big cypress which stands out in the water away from the shore." When we got there the boat was gone. "We must swim to the opposite side of that cypress, and not be slow about it," said Smith. "I cut out a door in that tree on the water front and fixed a seat in it so that I could set on it, and catch fish. We will be safe from their sight in there."

"Did the dogs not follow you in the water and disclose your hiding place?" asked the reporter.

"Yes, they came right in, and if they could have spoken they would have told. The 'gaters took one of the dogs down unto themselves and the other two were called out of the water. After the Yanks tried their marksmanship on some ducks away out in the river, they returned to their camp, leaving us undisturbed by their presence.

"That was the most welcome thing coming your way for several hours," suggested the reporter.

GUARDED BY 'GATERS.

Indeed it was! Perhaps an hour after their departure, Smith and I were discussing the possibility of our escape from the 'gaters,

that were holding us prisoners in our retreat—a dozen or more. Our talk was interrupted by a peculiar noise, low, but distinct. It was a well known countersign to Smith, by which to recognize a friend when it was made. Smith answered the signal in low and cautious tones, saying: "Is that you, Ben?" The answer came back, asking: "Is that you, Sam?" By this time Smith had recognized the voice of his cousin, another one of Col. Harry Maury's scouts. "Hello Ned! you are the most welcome man alive!" said Smith. "I and the man I went to relieve at Barrancas are here. The Yanks run us into this tree and the 'gaters have kept us here. We are glad to have you come!

"Well, get in the boat. You did not return as soon as I expected. I took your boat and went after these fine trout to sell to the Yanks, while I was looking after your safety. We had better row up to the mouth of Hurrican creek, where some of Col. Harry's cavalry have been awaiting our arrival," said Ned. The cavalry had gone when we landed. We made a fire and roasted the fish in their jackets. We gathered some grains of corn the horses had wasted while eating. These we roasted also, and of the roasted fish and corn we made our dinner. We felt safe in taking an hour for sleep before resuming our journey to Col. Maury's camp at Bluff Springs."

"Excuse me for a last question," said the reporter. "Did you think you was at the end of your road, when choking on the end of the Yank's rope?"

No. Strange to say, I did not. As long

consciousness lasted, I was thinking, "who will relieve me from this perilous situation."

"That statement is astonishing," said the reporter. "What reason had you for entertaining such thoughts at such a time as that?"

Myself and most of my comrades at camp near Amite City, La., talked over what "we each felt would be our fate in battle." As for myself, I felt that I should come out alive with injuries."

"I suppose you, in common with the U. C. V's., love to tell of your battles, marches and camp life. But especially of this incident on the night of the 4th of April, 1864?"

On the contrary, that is the only abhorrent part of my service to relate. The remainder is glorious. My rank and membership in the "Secret Service" exempted me from service on the battle line. But after this occurrence I never let a convenient opportunity slip by me unused when the battle was on.

When the fate of war passed, I had more than anyone to forgive in the things which I suffered in my body. But now I glory in a united country. We need to be such, as a balance wheel of Power to regulate the peace and war of the world.

WE WISH HIM SUCCESS.

From the Fitzgerald (Ga.) Citizen.

Rev. J. T. Mann started today on an extended trip through the Southwest. As our people know, Rev. Mr. Mann is author of several books and it is in the interest of his latest book, "The First Church," that he will be in the Southwest. Mr. Mann is well past his three score years and ten, and is in feeble

health. He has a blind and helpless sister to provide with bread and a home.

Rev. Mr. Mann was a "Louisiana Tiger," and had a thrilling war record. At Gaines' Mill, Va., he sustained wounds in hand and neck. He was in the engagement with General Pope near Rapidan on Cedar Mountain, ending his career as a gun bearer with wounds at Manassas. He was hung as a spy on April 4, 1864, and was rescued after he had become unconscious.

Rev. Mr. Mann is a pleasing looking gentleman of slender built, erect figure and manly bearing. His clear grey eyes still sparkle with the courage that led him to take his life in hand on hundreds of perilous missions in the service of the Lost Cause.

His active service ceased at the fall of Fort Steadman, having been taken a prisoner of war March 25, 1865. * * * * *

This aged Confederate veteran is in straightened circumstances, which he is endeavoring to relieve by the sale of his book. A liberal public will assist a deserving man in his laudable efforts.

In following the more peaceful pursuit of preaching the gospel he early became interested in "What Is the Church According to Christ?" and doubtless put more study on the subject than any other man ever did.

Mr. Mann is an ordained minister of the Missionary Baptist Church; his life is centered in his volume which is entitled, "The First Church." Favorable comments from men of letters, excuse the author in his pride as to its worth as a book of general information about the origin of all the churches, their present membership, etc. It is of special interest for Baptist people. Infirmary makes him dependent on sales of his book for living expenses for coming days.

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